11. Living arrangements across households in Europe

Chia Liu and Albert Esteve

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores living arrangements across 21 European countries. Globally, European living arrangements are characterised by uniquely high levels of single-person households, the predominance of nuclear families, and low levels of intergenerational co-residence between adult children and their parents (Eurostat 2015; United Nations 2018). European households show lower levels of complexity than households in Africa, Latin America, or Asia (Esteve and Liu 2018; Esteve et al. 2012). European households overwhelmingly consist of married or cohabiting parents with their minor children. However, living arrangements are far from homogenous across European countries. A wide range of family forms and household types can be found across sub-regions and countries within Europe.

The diversity of living arrangements in Europe is the result of deep historical roots of family systems that trace back to preindustrial times (Hajnal 1982). The structural or cultural nature of this diversity has been debated since the late nineteenth century. The main focus of these debates has been on intergenerational co-residence between adult children and their parents. Earlier scholarship on intergenerational co-residence centred on its relationship with economic development (Le Play 1871). By the twentieth century, it was widely accepted that single-generation nuclear families had become dominant in the West as a response to the needs of industrial societies for flexibility and individualism (Burgess 1916; Ogburn 1933; Parsons 1949). It was further assumed that with economic development, the nuclear family would inevitably spread across the world (Goode 1963). However, little, if any, of this theorising was informed by empirical analyses of large-scale trends until Peter Laslett compiled crude measures of family composition for 100 preindustrial English communities (Laslett and Wall 1972). His findings led to the revisionist hypothesis that there has been no long-term change in family composition (Hareven 1993), and that the indelibility of family norms and values would ensure regional diversity for centuries to come (Hajnal 1965; Reher 1998; Thornton 2013). The validity of this assumption is supported by the heterogeneity of in living arrangements that is still present in Europe.

This chapter provides an account of Europe's regional diversity in living arrangements. A traditional way to approach the study of family diversity is by using the family as a unit of analysis. Given the nature of our data, we take an 'individual approach' in which we use the individual as a unit of analysis and classify the respondents by their living arrangements. This enables us to break down the analysis by individual-level characteristics, such as by age and sex. The age distribution of living arrangements provides valuable information for characterising family diversity over the life course and across countries. Moreover, the tabulation of living arrangements by age provides insights into when people experience major life course transitions in the family domain, such as leaving the parental home, partnership formation,

having children, and union dissolution. This chapter highlights the diversity of these patterns within contemporary Europe, and allows us to investigate at which ages the living arrangements of Europeans are more likely to diverge or to converge. Data for this analysis come from the Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2006 and 2016.

2. FAMILY TRANSITIONS AND FAMILY DIVERSITY

Based on the previous literature and the existing knowledge of family dynamics in Europe (Buchmann and Kriesi 2011), we expect to observe that cross-national variations in key transitions to adulthood (Billari and Wilson 2001; Goldscheider and DaVanzo 1985) have the largest implications for living arrangements. These transitions revolve around the magnitude and the timing of leaving the parental home, forming a union, and having children. The first transition determines the length of an individual's co-residence with their parents. Nearly all children in Europe live with their parents (or at least one parent) until they leave the parental home, which typically occurs once they reach adulthood. This transition takes place at different ages across European countries. It occurs later for young adults in Mediterranean countries than for their counterparts in Northern or Western Europe (Reher 1998). A move out of the parental household often coincides with the formation of a conjugal union (Billari and Liefbroer 2010; Fokkema and Liefbroer 2008). However, the widespread postponement of union formation weakens this association. Thus, the postponement of union formation has direct implications for living arrangements. A young adult may set up their own independent household, or extend the period of co-residence with their parents before entering into a committed relationship.

However, while the ages at union formation and the types of unions young adults form differ across Europe, married or cohabiting couples almost always live independently from their parents, as multigenerational households are uncommon in Europe. Thus, most Europeans do not live with their parents, spouse, and children at the same time. Women tend to leave their parents' home earlier than men because women typically form conjugal unions at younger ages than men (Eurostat 2019). Unlike in other parts of the world, such as in Asia (Esteve and Liu 2018), stem families, which are characterised by the intergenerational co-residence of married adult children with their parents, are far less common in Europe.

Marriage or partnership formation usually marks the end of parental co-residence, and the beginning of co-residence with a partner, and, eventually, with children. Despite the drop in fertility rates and the increase in childlessness across European countries, complete and voluntary childlessness among couples is still rare in Europe (Miettinen et al. 2015). Thus, most middle-aged, partnered individuals also live with at least one minor child. However, due to rising union dissolution rates, single parenthood has been increasing rapidly in Europe. This trend has direct implications for living arrangements, as the share of adults who co-reside with a spouse is reduced, as is the percentage of children raised by both parents in the same household.

Finally, living alone is also a relatively common living arrangement in the European context. The percentage of people living alone differs greatly by age and sex. In Europe, individuals are more likely to forego union formation, to exit a dysfunctional relationship, and to remain single after union dissolution or widowhood – and, hence, to live alone in old age – than their counterparts in the rest of the world (Esteve et al. 2020; United Nations 2018). Elderly women are particularly likely to live alone. At younger ages, the postponement of union formation and

childbearing may contribute to increasing levels of 'living apart together' relationships, union dissolution, and childlessness.

3. DATA AND METHODS

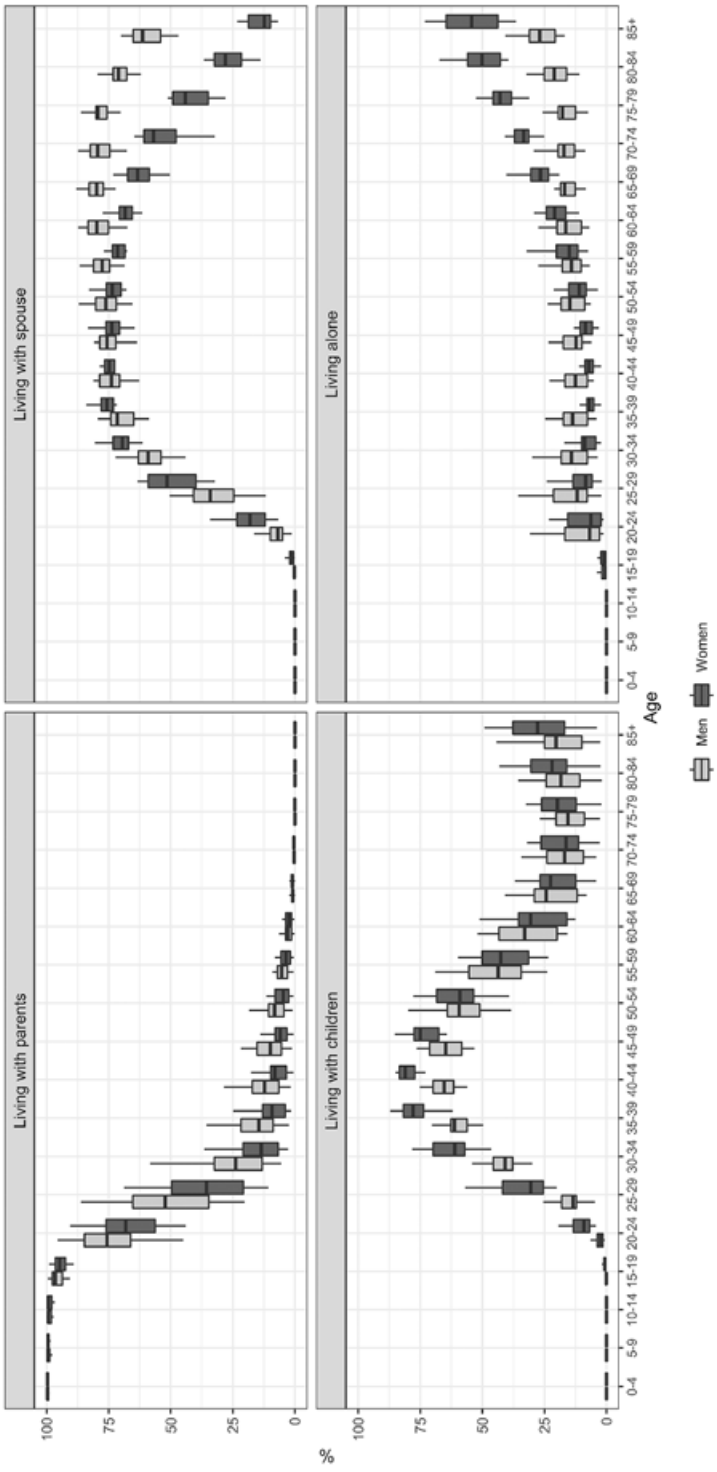
Using data from the cross-sectional EU-LFS, we examine the living arrangements of Europeans across different life stages, and describe how these arrangements changed between the years 2006 and 2016 by country, sex, and age. The EU-LFS is a collection of nationally representative random sample surveys across 35 European countries. Access to the data is provided by Eurostat through quarterly and yearly files. The data have been harmonised to facilitate cross-national comparisons (e.g., Alders and Manting 2001; Fokkema and Liefbroer 2008). For this chapter, we use yearly files, and select two data points: 2006 and 2016. In order to study living arrangements, we require microdata in which households and family units can be identified. The analysis is therefore restricted to those samples that include household-level data. Most Scandinavian countries are excluded from our analyses because household information for these countries is not available from the EU-LFS, which limits our final analyses to 21 countries. For presentation purposes, we assign these countries to the following sub-regions based on geographic criteria: Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, and Western Europe.

EU-LFS samples provide the information needed to establish who is related to whom within each household. In particular, the data link children to their parents, parents to their children, and conjugal partners to each other (either married or cohabiting). Therefore, for each person, we know whether their parents, partner, or children are present in the household. We focus exclusively on three partially overlapping categories in this chapter: namely, (1) the presence of a partner in the household, (2) the presence of children in the household, (3) the presence of parents in the household, and (4) living alone. Since European adults seldom live with their grandparents or with other relatives, we do not take further categories and living arrangements into account. Our analyses are focused on respondents aged 0–79. People aged 80 and above are omitted, as the risk of entering institutional care increases rapidly with age, and the data are not suited for investigating non-private households.

4. THE STRUCTURE OF LIVING ARRANGEMENTS ACROSS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

4.1 Patterns by Age

Figure 11.1 shows the aggregate pattern of co-residence by age based on data from 21 European countries. Each panel of the boxplots depicts the percentages by age of men and women living with their parents, a spouse, their children, or alone. These categories are not mutually exclusive. This figure displays the general age pattern of living arrangements and variations across countries. Boxplots depict groups of numerical data through their quartiles. The band inside the box indicates the second quartile (the median); and the bottom and the top limit indicate the lower and the upper quartile, respectively. The upper and the lower whiskers



Source: EU-LFS (2016), authors' elaboration.

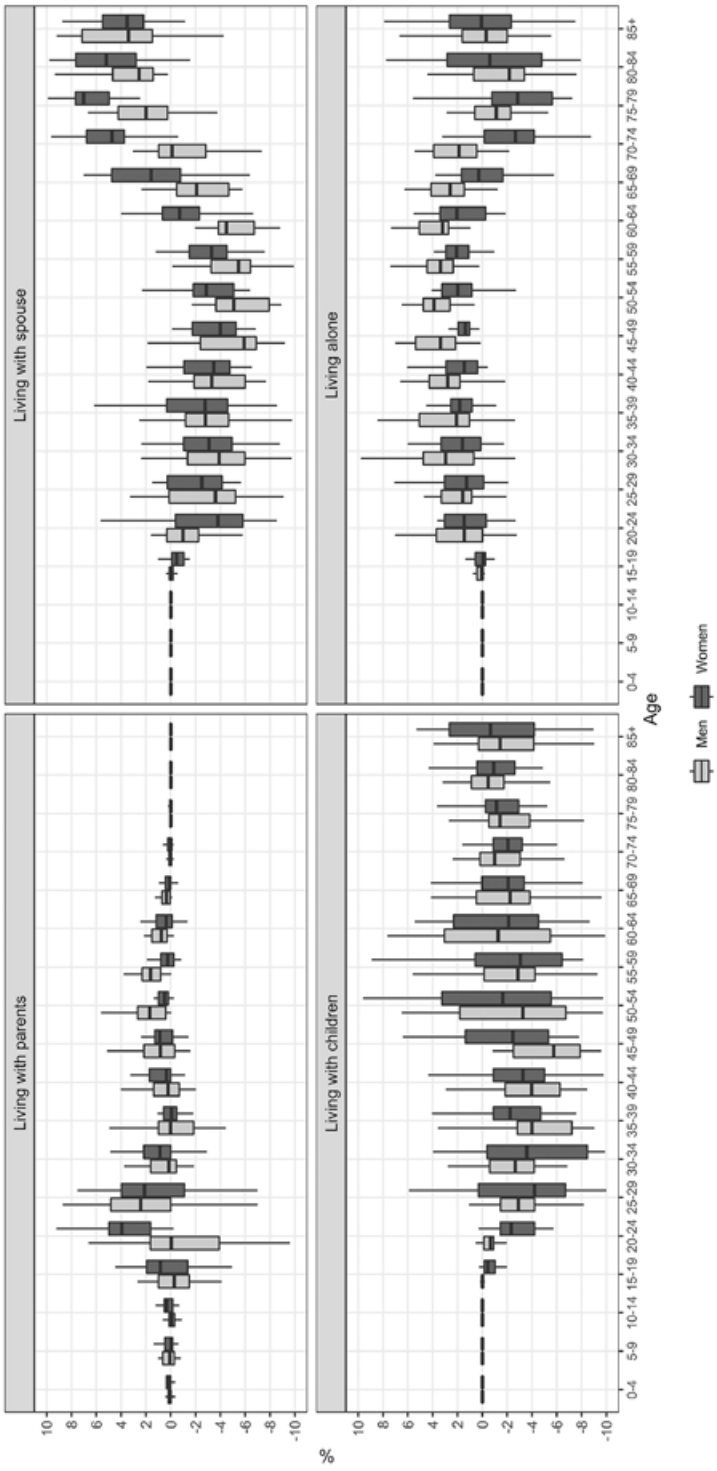
Figure 11.1 Percentage of individuals living with their parent(s), a spouse/partner, their child(ren), or alone by age and sex in 21 European countries in 2016

represent values outside of the upper and the lower quartiles. The length of the boxes shows the extent of variation across European countries.

The living arrangements of European children under age 20 were remarkably similar in 2016. The vast majority of children were living with at least one parent. Of the children who were living with only one parent (results not shown here), 90 per cent were living with their mother. As individuals reached their early 20s, their likelihood of living with their parents declined rapidly. When people were in their mid-20s to 30s, they became increasingly likely to be living with a spouse and children. The propensity to live alone was generally low throughout the earlier stages of the life course, but increased with age. There were, however, clear gender differences. First, women tended to leave the parental home earlier than men, primarily because women typically form unions at younger ages than men. At age 25, about 75 per cent of men were living with their parents, compared with roughly 70 per cent of women. By age 30, that gap had widened to roughly 51 per cent versus 30 per cent. Second, men tended to have stable patterns of spousal co-residence throughout the life course, with 75 per cent of men living with a spouse between ages 40 and nearly 80; whereas a similar share of women were living with a spouse at around age 40, but this share declined after age 50. Women were more likely than men to be living with children in the peak years for child co-residence; namely, ages 30 to 50. In the older age groups, women were more likely than men to be living alone. More than 50 per cent of women were living alone after age 85, whereas the share of men of the same age group who were living alone was roughly 10 percentage points lower. This was mainly because men tended to partner with younger women, and were thus less likely to experience widowhood than women, who were usually partnered with older men. Living with an adult child in old age was rare in Europe, with only about one-quarter of older individuals living with a child.

These general age patterns and gender differences held across all European countries, but within-region variations remained. Such variations were directly attributable to differences in the timing and the intensity of leaving the parental home, union formation, childbearing, union dissolution, and widowhood. The largest cross-national differences are observed between ages 20 and 34, and were mostly determined by the different tendencies of young adults to live with their parents. At ages 25–29, we find the largest differences in parental co-residence patterns across Europe for both men and women. The percentages of the men in this age group co-residing with their parents ranged between less than 20 per cent to more than 90 per cent. Cross-national variations in the shares of young adults co-residing with a partner or with children were also substantial, but were not as great as the levels of variation observed for parental co-residence. Variations in patterns of parental co-residence were, to a certain extent, replicated at older ages, when we observe the prevalence of parent–child co-residence from the parents' perspectives. From that perspective, cross-national differences were smaller because not all older adults had children, and those who did became parents at different ages. However, even after taking these factors into account, the shares of parents co-residing with children at ages 55–59 ranged from less than 25 per cent to 75 per cent. By contrast, the living arrangements of Europeans in their late 30s to 40s were similar.

Next, we examine how living arrangements changed across Europe between 2006 and 2016. The four panels of Figure 11.2 show the absolute changes in the percentages of individuals living with their parents, a spouse, their children, and alone by age and sex between the two years. Living arrangements were far from static during the observed period. Indeed,



Source: EU-LFS (2006, 2016), authors' elaboration.

Figure 11.2 Percentage changes in living arrangements by age, sex, and type of co-residence for 21 European countries from 2006 to 2016

substantial changes are observed in all types of co-residence. Some of these changes were occurring simultaneously in all countries, whereas other trends were diverging.

The likelihood of parental co-residence remained stable for the majority of age groups, but increased considerably among people in their late 20s. In the majority of countries, 25–29 year olds were more likely to be living with their parents in 2016 than in 2006, which suggests a delay in leaving the parental home. Conversely, the likelihood of living with a spouse decreased visibly throughout adulthood, with the exception of a sizable increase in late adulthood. It is probable that these trends resulted from a combination of factors, including increases in singlehood, delays in marriage or cohabitation, and union dissolution. However, the increase in spousal co-residence later in life is likely attributable to longer life expectancy and a narrowing in the gender gap in mortality. Thus, both men and women were less likely to experience widowhood, with women's chances of losing a spouse decreasing when compared with men. In line with lower levels of spousal co-residence, levels of child co-residence declined across all adult age groups between 2006 and 2016. For the oldest age groups, the likelihood of living with children changed little. Individuals roughly aged 35 to 50 became 2–3 per cent more likely to live alone, while the oldest individuals became less likely to live alone. The latter finding is in line with the higher levels of spousal co-residence shown in the plot above, as increases in life expectancy were also increasing the duration of unions (assuming that couples did not divorce or separate).

4.2 Co-Residence with Parents

While bearing the patterns observed in Figures 11.1 and 11.2 in mind, we now turn our attention to the ages and the types of co-residence in which we see the largest cross-national variations. We start by examining the likelihood of co-residing with parents among 25–29-year-old men and women. In Table 11.1, we show the percentages of individuals living with at least one parent between the ages of 25 and 29 by sex, union status, and country. We distinguish the following overlapping categories: a) 'single', meaning that the person was unmarried and did not share a household with a partner; b) living with a partner, regardless of marital status; and c) not living with a partner and being widowed, divorced, or legally separated. In the first column, we show the total percentage of young men living with their parents, as depicted in Figure 11.1. By region, Eastern and Southern European countries had higher levels of parental co-residence than Northern and Western Europe. By country, Hungary (86.2), Italy (74.3), and Greece (73) had the highest levels of parental co-residence. The lowest percentages are seen for young adults in Estonia (20.2) and the Netherlands (2.8). In all countries, women had lower levels of parental co-residence than men, with Hungarian women the highest (68.7) and Dutch women the lowest (10.6) levels.

The percentages of singles living with their parents was close to the total, as the vast majority of adults living with their parents at these ages were single. Again, Southern and Eastern European countries had the highest values, and the Western and Northern European countries had the lowest values. Hungarian (94.6), Slovakian (84.5), and Italian (80.6) single men were particularly likely to be living with at least one parent. On the other hand, just 23.5 per cent of Estonian single men were living with their parents. Single women in Hungary (95), Slovakia (76.1), Italy (75.5), and Greece (74.7) had a high likelihood of living with their parents. Despite gender differences in levels of co-residence, daughters and sons showed a roughly equal propensity to be living with their parents in all countries.

Table 11.1 Percentage of 25–29 year olds living with at least one parent by sex, marital status, and country in 2016

	Males				Females			
	Total	**Single and not living with partner**	**Living with partner**	**Widowed, divorced/ legally separated, and not living with partner**	**Total**	**Single and not living with partner**	**Living with partner**	**Widowed, divorced/ legally separated, and not living with partner**
Western Europe								
Austria	34.7	38.7	16.2	29.1	20.7	27.4	4.3	19.7
Belgium	36.9	41.0	7.2	26.3	21.9	28.1	3.5	14.3
France	24.4	27.5	3.6	37.3	12.4	15.1	2.4	10.7
Germany	23.2	27.7			13.1	18.7		
Netherlands	21.8	25.8	1.0		10.6	14.1	1.7	
Northern Europe								
Estonia	20.2	23.5	3.0	19.2	14.6	19.1	2.5	23.9
Ireland	45.0	49.3	7.6	9.0	36.6	44.1	4.4	22.0
Latvia	52.2	63.1	10.2	7.7	35.6	48.3	12.6	34.6
Lithuania	38.4	47.5	13.4	34.1	21.8	37.5	7.8	11.8
United Kingdom	29.9	36.1	6.4	16.4	17.3	24.5	1.8	6.0
Eastern Europe								
Czech Republic	44.7	52.0	2.7	18.8	25.6	34.6	4.3	14.7
Hungary	86.2	94.6	47.6		68.7	95.0	15.1	
Poland	53.7	72.6	15.8	56.5	38.8	63.2	16.2	51.8
Romania	64.8	74.9	35.2	56.1	33.2	61.8	9.0	56.5
Slovakia	75.1	84.5	25.3	13.3	58.0	76.1	21.5	49.2
Southern Europe								
Cyprus	53.0	64.2	12.4	58.8	45.6	62.9	15.8	28.4
Greece	73.0	78.5	15.1	70.3	54.9	74.7	6.0	67.6
Italy	74.3	80.6	13.6	31.3	58.1	75.5	4.6	41.9
Portugal	65.3	70.8	9.3	56.4	51.9	61.1	13.4	12.7
Slovenia	58.3	62.5	18.5		44.2	55.7	5.0	41.2
Spain	67.8	73.2	6.4	49.6	49.6	60.0	6.8	41.2

Source: EU-LFS (2016), authors' elaboration. Empty cells indicate lack of cases in this category.

Individuals who were married or partnered were seldom living with their parents, as patrilocality or matrilocality are uncommon in Europe. Despite these lower levels, there were substantial differences across regions and countries. The highest levels of parental co-residence among married/partnered populations were in Eastern Europe, with values above 15 per cent for men, except in the Czech Republic. Levels of intergenerational co-residence for married young men were also high in Hungary and Romania, where more than one-third of married sons were living with their parents. About one out of every six young, married women in Poland, Cyprus, and Hungary were living with their parents. As there were no systematic differences

in these patterns between men and women, there was no clear evidence for patrilocality versus matrilocality. However, further analysis is needed to confirm this finding.

The individuals who were not in a union, but who were widowed, divorced, or legally separated, were more likely than those in a union, but less likely than their single counterparts, to be living with their parents. Systematically, men in this situation were more likely than women to be co-residing with their parents. Such living arrangements were most common in Southern and Eastern European countries, and the differences in the likelihood of parental co-residence between this group and the married/partnered group were greatest in these countries.

4.3 Spousal and Child Co-Residence at Different Life Stages

Next, we look at spousal and child co-residence for individuals in the age groups of 25 to 29, 40 to 44, and 55 to 59 based on 2016 data. Table 11.2 shows the percentages of individuals by sex and age group who were living with a (married or unmarried) partner. The right part of the

Table 11.2 Percentages of individuals living in a union (marital or non-marital) by sex, selected age groups, and country in 2016

	Males			**Females**		
	25–29	**40–44**	**55–59**	**25–29**	**40–44**	**55–59**
Western Europe						
Austria	39.5	86.5	49.7	49.3	87.1	38.3
Belgium	32.9	78.3	44.0	33.6	74.7	28.8
France	41.2	86.0	40.0	52.3	90.1	29.4
Germany	34.4	79.2	38.4	43.4	82.2	27.3
Netherlands	23.9	85.5	47.9	36.4	85.2	33.8
Northern Europe						
Estonia	58.0	81.3	32.9	71.5	88.5	25.8
Ireland	42.3	87.6	63.1	53.2	90.5	54.2
Latvia	70.5	85.7	47.1	75.4	86.0	43.6
Lithuania	58.8	92.1	39.0	74.5	89.5	32.0
United Kingdom	41.3	79.9	41.3	48.9	83.7	33.4
Eastern Europe						
Czech Republic	43.0	86.6	38.6	54.1	89.0	25.9
Hungary	66.9	91.7	75.2	72.4	95.5	61.0
Poland	59.5	91.3	51.0	67.6	90.8	43.4
Romania	53.7	88.7	58.4	64.5	88.2	47.1
Slovakia	67.8	92.2	59.3	70.0	92.7	49.4
Southern Europe						
Cyprus	37.9	90.3	76.3	50.6	92.5	61.4
Greece	38.9	81.5	63.3	56.2	83.6	46.7
Italy	57.0	84.5	77.4	65.8	87.2	66.3
Portugal	45.3	91.5	66.4	51.2	93.1	55.8
Slovenia	51.7	89.6	58.6	62.4	91.4	45.9
Spain	40.6	82.7	70.2	47.1	86.1	60.6

Source: EU-LFS (2016), authors' elaboration.

table displays the percentages of all individuals who were living with children out of all individuals in a union. The results by country show that in France, more than half of men and about 63 per cent of women were married or partnered by ages 25 to 29. The figures were similar for the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Estonia; but were far lower in the Southern European countries. Less than 12 per cent of men in Greece and about 13 per cent of men in Italy of the same age group had formed a conjugal union. Out of all individuals who were in a union at ages 25 to 29, the percentage who had children was higher in the Baltic states and in Eastern European countries. About 71 per cent of men and three-quarters of partnered women had children in Latvia, compared with less than one-quarter of men and 36.4 per cent of women in the Netherlands. Within each geographic region, France, Latvia, Hungary, and Italy stand out for having higher levels of early childbearing than their neighbours.

Table 11.3 Percentages of individuals living with children by sex, selected age groups, and country in 2016

	Males			**Females**		
	25–29	**40–44**	**55–59**	**25–29**	**40–44**	**55–59**
Western Europe						
Austria	36.3	70.5	74.6	52.5	75.6	67.5
Belgium	39.4	73.9	72.1	57.8	72.7	68.2
France	50.4	74.9	76.3	62.9	73.8	68.4
Germany	34.1	67.9	73.1	51.5	72.7	71.8
Netherlands	43.9	74.4	75.3	59.5	76.4	75.8
Northern Europe						
Estonia	43.5	72.8	68.6	63.4	66.2	53.9
Ireland	28.4	79.0	77.7	39.8	74.1	71.4
Latvia	37.3	64.6	70.3	52.5	64.5	55.2
Lithuania	25.6	62.6	63.8	42.2	57.8	51.0
United Kingdom	50.3	79.3	77.3	59.7	72.8	70.0
Eastern Europe						
Czech Republic	41.2	77.1	81.1	59.1	75.3	71.2
Hungary	17.9	74.4	82.3	32.2	78.6	76.2
Poland	40.8	81.1	80.9	56.9	78.3	73.4
Romania	32.6	80.9	78.9	61.0	84.9	71.1
Slovakia	21.5	72.5	82.3	41.2	76.6	70.3
Southern Europe						
Cyprus	34.2	80.5	86.7	45.2	72.5	74.4
Greece	11.7	71.8	84.2	33.9	78.3	76.9
Italy	13.2	70.7	79.7	32.9	74.8	72.7
Portugal	26.3	78.6	82.7	37.6	73.5	75.5
Slovenia	24.7	70.7	75.4	43.7	78.6	72.5
Spain	22.1	73.0	78.8	39.8	74.8	72.5

Source: EU-LFS (2016), authors' elaboration.

The proportion of individuals in a union reached its peak at ages 40 to 44. Gender differences in spousal and child co-residence were lower in this age group than in the 25 to 29 age group, with men actually having a higher level of spousal co-residence than women in some countries. However, depending on the partnership form, union dissolution, and re-partnership patterns, spousal co-residential patterns can be difficult to disentangle. The share of men who were living with a spouse was over 80 per cent in Poland, Romania, and Cyprus; and was over 70 per cent in most other countries. The share of women who were co-residing with a spouse was over 70 per cent in all countries other than the Baltic states, and was close to 85 per cent in Romania. Most coupled individuals in the 40 to 44 age group had children.

Table 11.3 shows the percentages of men and women who were living with their own children. Parent–child co-residence may have different origins. The children of parents in the 55 to 59 age group may not have left their parents' home, or they may have left home but continued to reside in their parents' household. Given that the average age of childbearing in 1985 was roughly 26 years old for women in today's EU-25 (Eurostat 2006), and most individuals choose a partner close to their age, we can assume that, on average, 55–59-year-old parents in 2016 had children in the age range of 25 to 35. However, men were more likely than women to have younger children, particularly those who partnered or re-partnered with much younger women. As we observed for Figure 11.1, the large cross-national differences in levels of co-residence with children at these ages likely reflect differences in the ages at which young adults were leaving the parental home. Levels of parent–child co-residence were lower in Northern and Western Europe than in Eastern and Southern Europe. Women had systematically lower levels of parent–child co-residence, mainly due to their early patterns of childbearing.

4.4 Single Parenthood

The patterns of living arrangements described up to this point have been observed through a set of non-mutually exclusive categories. Thus, both in theory and in practice, one person could be living with their parents, spouse, and children at the same time. Of all possible combinations, we focus now on single parenthood, a term we use for all individuals co-residing with at least one child, but not with a spouse. It is likely that the majority of single parents became single following a union dissolution, but we cannot verify that this is the case given the limitations of the data. The results shown in Table 11.4 indicate the prevalence of single parenthood in Europe by sex, age group, and country. At all ages and in all countries, the likelihood of being a single parent was far lower for men than for women. Single parenthood was more common in Northern Europe than in other regions, and reached its highest level among those around 40 years of age.

Very few European men in the 25–29 age group were living with a child but without a partner; the highest shares of single fathers in this age group were in Latvia and Lithuania, hovering at around 1 per cent. For women aged 25–29, the percentage who were single mothers ranged from 1 per cent in Greece to 14.7 per cent in Latvia, with other Northern European countries being in the same ballpark. Outside of Northern Europe, France, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia also had relatively high proportions of young single mothers, at over 8 per cent each. Among the 40–44 age group, the percentages of unpartnered men and women with children doubled or tripled in most countries. Lithuania led the European countries in single parenthood, with more than 30 per cent of women and more than 6 per cent of men living with at least one child and without a partner. Women in Greece and men in Italy

Table 11.4 Percentages living with child(ren) but without a partner by sex, selected age groups, and country in 2016

	Males			Females		
	25–29	**40–44**	**55–59**	**25–29**	**40–44**	**55–59**
Western Europe						
Austria	0.1	1.2	2.4	4.1	11.3	7.8
Belgium	0.5	2.4	5.3	4.2	13.3	10.3
France	0.6	4.2	3.5	8.5	17.0	9.1
Germany	0.5	2.2	2.3	5.9	13.2	5.4
Netherlands	0.2	1.8	3.3	3.9	12.2	5.7
Northern Europe						
Estonia	0.3	3.1	1.3	11.6	21.5	9.5
Ireland	0.2	1.2	2.7	12.2	15.3	11.3
Latvia	1.2	3.2	4.5	13.3	24.4	18.4
Lithuania	1.0	6.2	4.1	14.7	30.3	15.3
United Kingdom	0.3	2.0	2.4	12.6	16.6	9.6
Eastern Europe						
Czech Republic	0.3	2.1	2.0	8.2	16.1	8.8
Hungary	0.3	1.5	3.3	2.1	8.4	13.3
Poland	0.3	1.1	2.3	8.9	13.6	10.7
Romania	0.3	3.1	4.4	3.6	8.5	13.4
Slovakia	0.3	1.9	2.3	8.3	14.0	13.5
Southern Europe						
Cyprus	0.2	2.2	2.9	3.7	14.6	10.9
Greece	0.0	1.1	2.1	1.0	8.0	8.7
Italy	0.3	0.9	2.8	2.9	9.6	10.9
Portugal	0.1	2.2	3.3	6.3	15.0	11.6
Slovenia	0.5	2.0	2.2	3.2	9.1	9.7
Spain	0.6	1.1	3.4	5.0	11.0	12.9

Source: EU-LFS (2016), authors' elaboration.

were the least likely to be single parents, at 8 per cent and less than 1 per cent, respectively. In late adulthood, at ages 55 to 59, the likelihood of living with children but without a partner increased slightly for men in some countries, especially in Southern Europe and Belgium. This share generally declined for women in this age group, except for women in Romania, Hungary, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Slovenia. This difference was likely due to men having children at later ages.

4.5 Living Alone

Finally, we show the percentages of individuals living alone by sex, age group, and country in Table 11.5. Living alone can occur in different life stages, but is particularly common in later life. We use the age groups 25 to 29, 55 to 59, and 75 to 79 to capture different contexts of single living at various life stages. For the 25 to 29 year olds, living alone generally meant that the young adult had left their parental home, but had not (yet) set up their own conjugal

Table 11.5 Percentage living alone and percentage never married among those living alone by sex, selected age groups, and country 2016

	% living alone						% never married among those living alone					
	Males			Females			Males			Females		
	25–29	55–59	75–79	25–29	55–59	75–79	25–29	55–59	75–79	25–29	55–59	75–79
Western Europe												
Austria	22.5	18.6	18.7	18.6	21.7	45.7	97.4	43.6	13.5	95.4	31.1	10.6
Belgium	8.7	17.7	9.3	11.7	17.5	31.1	97.0	35.9	13.1	94.6	22.3	8.1
France	12.6	17.4	18.5	14.6	20.7	43.9	98.6	49.4	15.7	99.8	31.0	9.0
Germany	29.9	20.8	17.7	23.1	20.1	44.1	97.0	46.0	19.1	96.3	28.1	7.2
Netherlands	26.2	19.9	20.1	23.5	17.7	52.5	98.9	46.1	22.2	99.0	40.4	6.2
Northern Europe												
Estonia	0.6	21.7	0.0	13.5	32.2	0.0	99.7	16.1	0.0	99.1	25.1	0.0
Ireland	2.8	14.1	25.1	2.8	14.0	41.0	96.7	64.6	42.4	95.4	47.8	13.0
Latvia	4.3	16.9	19.4	7.2	22.2	47.8	91.3	25.7	12.3	85.1	16.3	10.3
Lithuania	1.7	27.4	15.7	24.1	29.5	49.5	87.1	17.4	11.7	71.3	10.5	6.4
United Kingdom	12.1	17.7	25.7	8.6	19.2	42.9	91.0	43.8	16.3	93.0	27.2	7.2
Eastern Europe												
Czech Republic	12.3	14.0	17.8	9.1	18.6	48.6	96.8	28.0	6.8	97.7	6.5	1.8
Hungary	0.6	8.5	12.5	1.9	7.4	40.7	100.0	59.0	4.0	100.0	29.6	1.7
Poland	5.4	10.2	14.1	6.3	12.4	38.3	97.3	41.2	10.9	97.1	18.5	4.7
Romania	5.7	12.8	21.0	5.8	12.3	44.6	96.5	27.2	3.5	94.3	11.3	1.6
Slovakia	3.0	8.6	11.5	3.5	11.0	38.7	97.5	51.9	11.5	95.9	24.8	5.6
Southern Europe												
Cyprus	0.8	6.7	7.4	8.4	11.6	34.5	94.9	39.4	3.4	98.3	21.2	0.4
Greece	1.7	9.2	15.8	8.3	11.1	41.8	98.7	52.7	13.5	98.2	34.0	6.0
Italy	10.0	13.2	19.1	7.0	13.6	43.9	93.0	48.1	26.0	95.2	30.6	10.8
Portugal	0.9	8.7	10.1	5.8	8.7	34.2	96.6	39.4	13.6	95.9	24.6	10.5
Slovenia	1.5	17.8	20.7	11.3	14.9	47.8	96.3	55.4	24.4	92.7	28.7	7.6
Spain	7.6	10.6	14.7	5.4	10.0	32.0	96.2	45.8	24.2	96.8	37.1	10.3

Source: EU-LFS 2016, authors' elaboration.

household, which could be seen as a transition to adulthood from the young adult's perspective. Living alone for individuals in the 55 to 59 age group could also reflect the transition to adulthood or the departure of their young adult children from the parents' perspective. It also approximated singlehood and union dissolution for those who had passed the peak of their union formation years. To account for singlehood specifically, we show the percentages of those who never married in parentheses. Lastly, most of the 75- to 79-year-old individuals who were living alone were widowed or no longer living with their children, rather than single, since both childbearing and marriage were far more universal for this cohort, who were born between 1937 and 1941. We cap the age at 79 to avoid missing those who moved into nursing homes at very old ages, because EU-LFS does not systematically include individuals living in institutions.

Most of the young adults who were living alone had not married by ages 25 to 29. In most countries, more than 95 per cent of these individuals were unmarried, except in Latvia and Lithuania. Therefore, parental co-residence was the most likely scenario for individuals of this age group. Young adults were far more likely to be living alone in Western Europe than in the rest of Europe. Almost 30 per cent of German men and 23.1 per cent of German women were living alone between ages 25 and 29. The Netherlands had similar rates of 26.2 per cent for men and 23.5 per cent for women. In other parts of Europe, the majority of young men and women were not living alone, with less than 1 per cent of men living alone between ages 25 and 29 in Estonia, Hungary, Cyprus, and Portugal; up to 12.3 per cent living alone in the Czech Republic; and 12.1 per cent living alone in the United Kingdom. For women of the same age group, the share who were living alone ranged from less than 5 per cent in Ireland, Hungary, and Slovakia to as high as 13.5 per cent in Estonia and 24.1 per cent in Lithuania.

In the 55–59 age group, Northern Europeans were generally more likely than their counterparts in other regions to be living alone. This may have been due to union instability in combination with childlessness or the early departure of child(ren). More than one-quarter of Lithuanian men and close to 30 per cent of Lithuanian women in this age group were living alone. This living arrangement was far less common among Cypriot men and Hungarian men, at 6.7 per cent and 8.5 per cent, respectively; and among Hungarian women and Portuguese women, at 7.4 per cent and 8.7 per cent, respectively. A larger proportion of men than women had never been married at this age. Thus, single living among these women might be more attributable to union dissolution than to singlehood.

In the oldest age group of our analyses, 75 to 79, women were far more likely than men to be living alone, and the percentage differences between the 55 to 59 age group and the 75 to 79 age group were starker for women. In most countries, men were similarly likely to live alone in the 55 to 59 and 75 to 79 age groups, whereas women's likelihood of living alone more than doubled from one age group to the next in many countries. For example, about 20 per cent of German men were living alone in both the 55 to 59 and 75 to 79 age groups. For German women, 17.7 per cent were living alone at ages 55–59, but more than half, or 52.5 per cent, were living alone at ages 75 to 79. Interestingly, Ireland had a much higher level of life-long male singlehood than other countries, with 42.4 per cent of 75- to 79-year-old men having never been married, compared to just 16.3 per cent of their counterparts in the neighbouring United Kingdom.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has provided an overview of living arrangements across 21 European countries based on recent data from the EU-LFS. We have not specifically addressed the background factors that contribute to the observed patterns. Instead, we focused our attention on showing how (dis)similar living arrangements are across European countries, and how these arrangements have changed since 2006.

The variations in living arrangements among European countries were most evident for parental co-residence in young adulthood (20–29 years old), parent–child co-residence in middle to old age (50–69), and lone living for women in the later life stages (80+). The likelihood of spousal co-residence peaked at around 65–69 years old for men, at roughly 77 per cent; but peaked for women at ages 35–39, at around 75 per cent. Living arrangements

changed between the years 2006 and 2016. Young women in particular increasingly delayed their departure from the parental home. Levels of spousal and child co-residence dropped for both sexes, particularly in the peak childbearing years. People were slightly more likely to be living alone in 2016 than in 2006. Levels of spousal co-residence increased substantially at older ages, particularly for women; most likely due to the increased longevity of men. Thus, the likelihood of living alone late in life decreased modestly. Living alone while under age 60 continues to be uncommon in Europe, although it is more prevalent than in other parts of the world (Esteve et al. 2020). In most countries, women were more likely than men to be living alone across all life stages, particularly later in life. As levels of union instability and childlessness rise, living alone in middle and late life stages will become increasingly common.

The regional pattern that emerges in most dimensions studied in this chapter conforms to the traditional pattern that divides Europe into 'strong' family systems, such as those found in the Mediterranean countries (Italy, Spain, Greece); and 'weak' family systems, exemplified by those found in the Central and Northern European countries, such as Germany and the United Kingdom (Reher 1998; Schwanitz and Mulder 2015). Our findings show that a regional divide in living arrangements persists in Europe. Northern and Western Europe are characterised by earlier departure from the parental home, earlier union formation, and higher levels of lone living. Northern Europe has particularly early childbearing and high levels of single motherhood. Eastern and Southern Europe are characterised by later departure from the parental home, later union formation, and a greater likelihood of co-residing with children at older ages.

Scholars have cited various factors in seeking to explain these patterns. It has, for example, been argued that welfare regimes both complement and reinforce how family members organise themselves by promoting individualism or familism through social care allowances and programmes (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999). However, there is also evidence that structural factors only partially explain the levels of social exchanges within families, and that the normative climate continues to play a role (Jappens and Van Bavel 2012). The effect of social norms and culture therefore can be bi-directional, or at least difficult to disentangle.

Labour market and other economic conditions drive both individual- and family-level coping strategies, such as living together for the benefit of economies of scale (Danziger and Ratner 2010). In line with research in the United States, European scholars found that the economic crisis of 2008 has delayed the transition to adulthood for individuals aged 18 to 34 (Lennartz et al. 2016). It appears, for example, that people in this age group have been postponing leaving the parental home, delaying union formation (especially for men), and delaying or foregoing childbearing (Pailhé and Régnier-Loilier 2015). These trends, in turn, shape the household structures in which people live, and are reflected in our findings that levels of parental co-residence increased and levels of spousal and child co-residence decreased between 2006 and 2016 for individuals aged 20 to 29.

In the Mediterranean countries, strong intra-familial solidarity persists in the later departure of young adults from the parental home, observed from the perspectives of both the young adults and the middle-aged parents. A delay in marriage is clearly associated with a delay in the departure of young adults from their parents' home in countries such as Italy (Giuliano 2007). In addition to economic conditions and culture, housing availability and policies can heavily influence the living arrangements of individuals. For example, in Spain, the exceptionally high rate of homeownership (Cabré and Módenes Cabrerizo 2004), in combination with steadily rising rents in major cities across the country in recent years, might have discouraged the younger generation from moving out of the parental household, particularly during and

immediately after the crisis (Blanco-Romero et al. 2018). Countries with strong government control of public housing, such as the Netherlands (Smits et al. 2014), tend to facilitate independent living; while countries that enable relatively easy and flexible entry into homeownership, such as Sweden, promote entry into a marital union (Holland 2012).

Moreover, as the recent intensification of competition for specialised jobs has led to the prolongation of education (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2018), young adults have been spending more years of their lives as dependents in their parents' household. This phenomenon, dubbed 'emerging adulthood' (Tanner and Arnett 2016), specifically refers to individuals aged 18 to 25, whose independence may be further delayed by the need to explore their identities and find their place in the world.

Our results clearly show that the main cross-national variations in living arrangements in Europe are related to the timing of the transition to adulthood. Key events that occur during this time frame in an individual's life course include leaving the parental home, forming a conjugal partnership, and childbearing – all of which shape the individual's propensity to live with their parents, a partner, and/or their child(ren). As multigenerational households remain uncommon in Europe, union formation typically coincides with the departure from the parental home. Higher levels of union instability often lead to single parenthood, which mostly affects women. As fertility has declined and union instability has increased across Europe, co-residence with primary kin has become less common. The modest but stable increase in people living alone might be in part a response to social changes. Future research should explore the specific causes and implications for societies of changes in living arrangements.

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